

Interview with Florencio Morales

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Tape 1, Side A

004: Shows pictures of when first came to Guilford, groups that formed, people involved. First wife and he lived in South Bx, 1948-1953, then moved to Guilford. Met Daniel [?] who working for govt of PR in NY. "He came to Guilford and we organized the first Spanish-American group... One of the surprising things was that...one Saturday, in Puerto Rico we celebrate Mass, Sabado de Gloria, and we went to the Catholic church in Guilford, it was closed. We couldn't understand why. It was because Catholics in Guilford...were a minority...The church was not even on the Green. Now it's in front of the Green...St. George. It used to be up on...Whitfield Avenue, a little chapel down there."

035: Stone? Family. "Those are the people that provided us with the jobs when we first came to Guilford. In fact they hired me in 1953 because they couldn't find help for the foundry...I was an all-around man and a recruiter."

049: Shows pictures of another group helped found, Civic League of New Haven. Had dances to collect funds for hurricane victims in PR, etc.

055: "A poor guy always dreams of becoming rich. When I graduated from high school in 1936 in Coamo, which is a little town on the southern part of the island, there was nothing to do. You just came out of school, you're worthless, really, because there are no jobs, nothing. If you get a little job it pays peanuts, so I drifted. I came to San Juan, and I had some relatives in SJ, and then I started moving around, I became involved with the labor movement, I became a steward for the organization of the hotels and restaurants union of PR. We started...organizing workers in Mayaguez, in Ponce, San Juan, so I became active in that and eventually the war started in the 40s and I went to work for the Navy...I learned a little bit of English there, at least how to call a boat 'boat,' and screw 'screw.' "

073: "Once the war was over...I applied for a job in a club that was very very exclusive, in Santurce, it was the Jacks Panamerican Club...That was on Stop 10 in Santurce...They hired me and for some reason I had perhaps the desire to move up or they saw that I was worth it because...from busboy they made me a waiter, from a waiter they made me an assistant to the manager, and so on...I was dealing with the best of PR, the rich people,

the Lozanas of SJ, the Padins... Once in a while they would come to the club and make a big bill and they didn't pay it, they just went home and later on I went to collect... I got my good tipping by doing that... So finally I created a mental awareness that if I were somewhere else I will do better... and encouraged by the people themselves. They tell me, Florencio, if you go to NY, you will do wonderful. Because NY is the place to be, a guy like you should be in NY... So that got into my blood and in 1946 I got married. In 1947 I was really dreaming to come to NY. And in 1948 I came to NY. I came to NY looking for that big dream."

102: "I was in NY for 3 months without a job, I brought in 22 suits. Some of them I even sold for half a dollar... Shoes that I bought from Dexter by mail I had to give for a dollar... because... I couldn't find a job... I went to the Waldorf Astoria where they said, if you go to the Waldorf, you get a job right away... I had so many letters of recommendation from rich people of PR... None of those letters were worth [ ] and so I couldn't get a job. And my wife was in PR claiming that I had abandoned her... I said, I will never return to PR until I do better. And it took me a long time but I succeeded. I went to school, I got into the union, and at the end of the 3 months I met a friend of mine that had worked with me in SJ, and he took me in. He brought me to his apt and he was working for the Belmont Plaza in NY... and he got me a job as a dishwasher. And to get a dishwashing job in 1948 in the city of NY was more difficult than to get a doctor's job. Because there were so many people looking for jobs like that, unskilled work... A few months later they moved me into the silver man, that was better... To clean the silver. From there I became a food runner... a food runner is an individual that brings the food from the main kitchen to the various restaurants of the hotel, and from there I became a union steward... more respect now. Then they gave me a job as an elevator operator. The elevator operator captain retired, they made me the captain... with the uniform... I felt like I was getting somewhere."

136: "But I didn't like NY. I felt that NY was not the place for me. So one July my brother Gabriel, one of my younger brothers, that was in 1951, he had been working for a farm in NJ. And the apple orchards in CT... in Guilford, CT, the Bishops. They were looking for help. So they recruited from this farmer in NJ and PA, and they sent a group of men to work in Guilford, among them my brother Gabriel. In July of that year, 1951, he come in NY, and I came to Guilford, the first time in my life. In fact, there was not even an expressway in those days. Only the Merritt Parkway and Route 1. So I liked the little town... I was born and grew up in the country, in a little town so [I] came to Guilford... I went back to NY. In 1952 I came, got my brother, brought to NY for the winter. And in spring of 1952, I brought him back to Guilford. He didn't want to stay in NY. And then he kept on saying to me, why don't you move to Guilford. My brother Augie who lives in Guilford still, came and started to live in Guilford. My brother Wilson came in [southern?] Guilford. Then in 1953 I came to Guilford. And how I came to Guilford? I didn't come to stay, I came on vacation, again in July. And I was right on Route 1, and there was this plant there, it said Victor's Foundry. I didn't know what a foundry was. And I saw this tall gentleman cleaning. I thought he was the janitor, so I stop and ask him a couple of questions, and he says, are you looking for a job. I said well, I don't know yet... He says to me, you look a guy I would like to hire. I said well,

why don't you tell me what it is that you do here? He said, well come in. I was skeptical because I thought he was putting me on. This guy in broken dungarees... couldn't be the owner of this place, I thought. So he... sat down, he said to me, I will give you a job, easy job, and you will do this and this and this, and this is the pay, and you will work overtime, you will make good money here and if you get me men to work here I give you an extra for that... So I said, well, let me think about it."

181: "I went to NY, told my wife, and she raised hell. She said that I couldn't stand in one place long enough... I said well, but I'd like to go to Guilford. So she didn't want to come, I came alone. And this gentleman found me an apt. In Guilford there was no places... because everybody owns homes. There was no rentals in Guilford. And there was a Jewish man that had a store, and he had some rooms, so he rented me a room there, and so what?... I stay in NY 2 more weeks, presented my resignation and came to Guilford. And I started working for them, I start recruiting people. And I tell you, they did very well, they were very good employees, very liberal people. I think it was the first time some of the people that came to work for them that had any relationship with the bank or anything like that. We had young men that came from Puerto Rico... and those guys had never even seen a 10 dollar bill. They came there and those guys started earning as much as a hundred dollars a week in 1953, working overtime and piecework. Those guys worked 6 days a week, like beavers. And they wasted their money, they were really blowing the money, buying automobiles and this and that, without a license, that was really something."

207: "The town started getting mad about us, and then started putting ordinances that we couldn't stand on the street, that we couldn't do this, we couldn't do that. I created a group then, and we start dealing with the town. And the town responded tremendously. We started learning English from the... English-speaking people of the town, and we were teaching them Spanish. It's over here, pictures of that... So the relationship was eased. Then we created the Spanish-American Association, we met... we had picnics, we had lechon asados, Puerto Rican style, all over the place, and in fact, Daniel Rineharson [?] was the first selectman of Guilford, used to call me the mayor and I became very active in the town and the state, obviously. In the 60s Governor Grasso appointed me as a justice of the peace. There was good feelings because actually I was in a process of growing my own family, my son was in high school, he graduated from Guilford. Today he's an engineer... My daughter didn't come to school in Guilford but she did very well in NY... Angie and I, my wife, we were in the process of organizing to have a home and stay in Guilford. We thought that we had come to the place where we were not going to leave... In 1954 I convinced her and she came... My wife was born and grew up in... Bayamon. She had never seen a fly in her life. She's afraid of everything that moves. We have in PR lagartijos, she's afraid of lagartijos... She didn't want to come to the country... But nevertheless she got adjusted."

244: "My wife's first job was in... the Guilford Laundry, earning 16 dollars a week. And there was a lady there, Mrs. Edna Smith, working there, and Edna told Angie that she knew about a place on White Rose Avenue that had been abandoned for generations... I went to see the place and as soon as I saw the place I said, this will be my home... But I

didn't have a penny...I was dreaming and I came to the foundry and I told Bill Stone...this is a place there I would like to see if I could make a home out of it. He said well...let me find out about it. The next day he came to me he said, Florencio, the place is for sale. My father, who is a realtor, has it for sale...I went home, I told Angie...they're asking 1500 dollars for that place, and I don't have a dime. I didn't have no credit, nothing. Angie said well, let me see what we can do. And when I returned from work that day, she said to me, Flor, I have 800 dollars. I said, what?...I have 800 dollars inside a shoe...The next day I went and I talked to Bill...we have 800 dollars to buy the place. If your father reduces the price to 1300 dollars, you could take 10 dollars out of my pay every week and I give you the 800 dollars cash. The next day Mr. [ ] called and said it's a deal. In fact, Mr. McGuinness, who knew me and was the town lawyer, did all the paperwork free...They waived all the extra charges, and the place became mine Sept 26, 1955...[Angie] had saved pennies...and dimes. Angie's very...frugal. In fact, she's so frugal, she's working still."

291: "And so we got the place. It was an old barn, a horse barn, and we converted it into a beautiful home...It's still there, we sold it. Guilford became a passion, and then by 1954 my mother came to Guilford. She brought me a dozen eggs from PR. I didn't eat those eggs. I hatched them and I had, holy cow, I had so many chickens, they used to call me the chicken man. Because there was a farmer that had hens. I [ ] the eggs to him, Mr. Rosenthal, and he converted the eggs into chicks."

306: "The foundry eventually was sold, and once the foundry was sold, the whole environment changed. The relationship became one of-- not trust. So we created a union. I became the steward of the union, we brought the Teamsters in, and then the confrontations took place, and by 1960...I decided the foundry was no longer the place to be. So I moved from the foundry to Cheseborough-Ponds. Again, back to cleaning floors...in the compound dept. They made me a compounder, and later on I was up on the tanks and making creams and stuff like that. And that was back in 1963."

322: "But I was running all over the state. I was having meetings in NY with people from Puerto Rico, I went to Puerto Rico, we met with Gov Muñoz Marin...they were sending us films to show to the people here on the farms...and try to show to the Puerto Rican community the need for involvement...and to become part of the system...I was working at Cheseborough-Ponds when I received a letter from New Haven, offering me a job in the city of NH. I went to meet with...Mayor Lee in NH and they offered me a job...Then I received a telegram from Htfd to come for an interview...A gentleman named John McLean had started in 1962 organizing the Community Renewal Team of Greater Hartford. And then, I came for the interview, April 9, 1964...They had an office at the YW on Ann St, which is now the Civic Center...They had moved from W Htfd, Main St, where they formed the group...I was hired...There were...five of us begun with the Community Renewal Team in 1964. They had already been doing some work since 1962. Mr Lloyd Cotwell [?] and others...I became a Community Renewal Team fieldworker. What we did was go out and do the same thing, interview people...tried to document the needs of the community."

370: "So in '65 I left for Norwalk, I went to S Norwalk to work in urban renewal. And I stayed in S Norwalk for a year...It was better pay and a better job, I felt, anyhow...In 1966 I came to lunch in Htfd with John McLean and he said, Flor, I need you. I want to pay you better, I want to give you a better job, I want you back in Htfd. So I came back to Htfd. And became the supervisor of the neighborhood centers...Carrie Saxon Perry...was in charge of my division, she was my boss. So I worked for Carrie for many years, and in the '70s I was already too senior in CRT...I became the director of this, director of that, and I felt that the first orientation on the Community Renewal Team to us was that the program was not to be forever. The program was just until the community became aware of the needs and the self-help type of program...that we were to drift out. In other words, the Community Renewal Team was like a school, teach you and then you fly out and you go and get yourself a job. So I did that in 1970 and applied for the govt job, with the federal govt."

401: "I went to PR on vacation that May and Angie called me in PR...I had a telegram from Washington...When I returned...they referred me...to the Navy base in Boston for an interview...They offered me a job...I was making with CRT about \$14,000 and I had an office, I had secretaries...I went anywhere I wanted to go, meetings and conferences and so on...They offered me \$9,500...I came home and told Angie, and she said, you crazy? But I said, no, I don't think I am, I'm going to take this job...I accepted the job with the federal govt, the dept of defense. The dept of defense created a first office for affirmative action pgms. And that was something. I had tremendous leverage, and I said, this is something that I would like to see...The first year...working for the govt I was making \$22,000. I came in right at the same time that they upgraded all the jobs..."

435: Regional office was in Boston, local office in Htfd. FM had gone to Oswego, U of NY to conference, had met John Melendez who lives in Tolland, been selected to direct office in Htfd. "I was explaining to the conference the Community Renewal Team involvement and programs, and they felt that there was a lot to be learned from those things...This man heard me talking, he offered me a job in Htfd. He was my first boss here at the Dept of Defense...The Community Renewal Team, we were instrumental in creating a program, it was called BOLT...Basic Occupational Language Training. The idea...came from NY. We went to NY many times to meet with the PR Forum, which now is here in Htfd, and Aspira...and from there we got the idea of creating under the CRT umbrella a pgm to teach...mostly Puerto Ricans that came here that had some skills. Like if you graduated in PR from...a technical school and you knew the job, but what you needed was some English to communicate, to learn the toolings of the job, so that's [what] Basic Occupational Language Training wants to do...I was the director of that program with...Hector Rivera, who is from Meriden, CT."

478: Pgm did very well, eventually closed because of lack of funding. Then created Farmworkers' Council under CRT umbrella. FM was part of that, used to meet with Maria Reyes from Boston, had office in Chicopee. He had gone to conference in Boston, met people active with migrant workers. State of MA had got already involved because a lot of complaints, reported abuses. CRT donated FM's time to organize it. Met with officials at UMass/Amherst, mtgs in Htfd, Springfield, had conference. He was one of

people who proposed name New England Farmworkers Council, became member of board. Alejandro La Luz and many others part of it.

520: "We created the New England Farmworkers Council because the workers were coming here from Puerto Rico, mainly men. And they were sold out to other farmers. And for instance, Puerto Ricans that never ate sandwiches for lunch. In Puerto Rico people in my days... we ate food with lunch. And these people were being fed poorly. Besides there was no health care at all. There was no participation in religious groups. See these people were just like in a camp with a guy with a gun. They were actually in a concentration camp here in Windsor Locks. So we start raising hell with that and fighting with the farmers in the tobacco industry... That's why the New England Council became so interested to the community, because we were going to be the spokespeople for the farmworkers, and we did... We... served... as advisors to local communities. I remember the many meetings we had with local officials, advising them of the future, which is today, that they didn't listen. Like for instance, Puerto Ricans were coming to camps here, right? Many of them would go back, many of them will drift out to other places. But many of them will stay around, which was told to the administrators... that eventually the school system... had to absorb some of these people. They were told about housing needs. Much of the things went unheard and as a result Barnard Brown became the school for the Puerto Rican community."

567: "The Puerto Ricans were not graduating from high school. Puerto Ricans were being lost in the transition. And then Dr. Rogler from Yale came at a time and start thinking about the idea of bilingual education. Now when I met with Dr. Rogler and many others in trying to organize the system that will take in the non-English-speaking children and try to bring them to a level where they could become part of the school system... The idea was just to create a program whereby children could become part of the whole spectrum of schooling, rather than to aid a system of one language... It was integration, really, because I have never believed in any other thing but integrating. Since I came to this country I found that when you... are part of it. If you separate yourself as a Puerto Rican or as this or that then you are going to be looked at as such. So because of that I had been able to communicate with the entire society... And so Dr. Rogler felt that way too... Today we have many Puerto Ricans that have benefited from bilingual education as well as the time, because they had grown up and children are born here and so on."

607: "But the 50s and the 60s brought tremendous suffering to the Puerto Rican community. And the reason why today most Puerto Ricans are in the ghettos and the public housing, and behind is because that kind of pattern of the past... We came from agrarian society. In the 40s we had over 350,000 Puerto Ricans dependent only one crop, sugar cane... The motto in Puerto Rico when I was a child, from the bosses was, to my father, to my mother. You send a boy to school, you're wasting your time... Send him to work... The Spaniards felt that men were to be in the fieldwork and not in the school learning... Learning was for the rich... In 1940s we found ourselves with this huge problem. A large community unable to do anything. And now, what happened is, technology had taken over. Now we don't need strong backs, we need strong minds. But

we didn't have the strong minds, we had the strong backs. We came here and I remember in NY, I would apply for a job, and the first question asked by the interviewer, are you from a farm? I said well, kind of so. So what do you do? He referred me to a farm in NJ because there was no farms in Manhattan. So when a Puerto Rican told to an interviewer here that he or she had a background of farming, they send him to tobacco, because there was nothing else, really. And in fact, many of the Puerto Ricans in that time came here...didn't do anything else and knew nothing else. Either you were a housewife or you were a fieldworker. And it's no secret that there is a great difference between an outdoors individual and an indoor individual. The indoor is the intellectual, the technician, the technical individual. The outdoor is a farmer, campesino. We were campesinos... That's what they refer us to...the unskilled jobs. And the school systems, the educators were not prepared, they did not understand. They had for generations considered that migration was European migration... The people that have had generations of schooling that came here with *sabia*... We didn't have none of those skills and therefore we became the victims. And therefore, our parents, and the parents of many many of the children had no way to learn much and the children grew up here and they had to go where? They had to go to welfare. The welfare was no friend of anybody, because the welfare created dependency in the Puerto Rican community. And once you get housing, once you get income without having to work, that becomes like a habit. And a woman that had children and had a husband, but the husband couldn't do, because whatever he earned was out in the field, and there's no farms in the winter. So they had to find a way to provide for the families. And how they do it? They had to do it through welfare."

717: "From there the suffering started, because eventually the husband drift out, the woman was left with the children in many instances. People were living out of public housing. Then... the food stamps came, and people were being fed."

### Tape 1, Side B

005: "They were not learning to do for themselves... They... became parasites. And the children became... gang leaders... And we were not getting the education that we needed, not because there was no way to be educated, there was plenty of schools... But don't forget, we were agrarian people. Our belief was not in schooling, getting ready and prepared. Our beliefs were in surviving, and that's what we were doing... Today we're paying the price... In many instances we have agencies representing the Hispanic community, especially Puerto Ricans. And I'm emphasizing the Puerto Ricans because it's what I know about... Most of the agencies today are becoming aware of the presence of the Puerto Rican because of the numbers. And because of the economic need too. So today you go to a bank, you find a bilingual person. Because many Puerto Ricans are coming to the bank... And because of them now were are opening doors, which is good. I'm glad to see that after so many years we're starting to see the benefits of our labor. So when I talked to Sam [Tirado] last week, I said... Sam, your time was not wasted. My time hasn't been wasted. When we created the Puerto Rican Parade, and we went to so many meetings, we spent so much time trying to tell the people to go to school to learn,

to become part and get involved. We many times came home very frustrated because we didn't see the benefits. Where today, we're seeing them. When I see a young man who's a lawyer and he says to me, Florencio, you remember in 1965 when I came from the University of Connecticut, that's attorney Sidney Schulman, and he was a kid at that time. Now today he's a prominent lawyer... People like that, that had become part of ideas and helped us create better ideas."

038: "So I think I have had a life of enjoyment. And I still get involved with many things. I'm still a member of the Lions Club. Last week we ran a program collecting funds to help the blind, and so that's what I like to see is the Puerto Rican people get involved. At the same time, see the community putting emphasis on what the Puerto Ricans can do. We have a club here in Bloomfield, Latinos Unidos. We emphasize in other communities to create groups... I go to Puerto Rico, see a friend of mine lives in Ponce... Dr. Ray Perry... Ray is one of the products of our labor here. Ray was a kid here on Albany Ave... Ray learned Spanish. He's a gringo from Bloomfield. Today he's a professor at the University Interamericana in Ponce. And Ray speaks Spanish like a Puerto Rican... He got involved... and today we're proud to see Ray still in that. He comes here and gives chats at universities about Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. We continue to grow and I hope we grow and grow and become part of the Historical Society."

066: With Dept of Defense enforced affirmative action concept. Pres. Johnson had signed Equal Opportunity and affirmative action pgms. Went out to indoctrinate the corporate structure in the states. He did CT, VT, ME, NY, MA, because regional office in Boston covered New England. "Our job was to go there, Mr. Employer, I am here from the Dept of Defense representing the Affirmative Action Pgm. You have a big contract with the federal govt. You make bombs for the federal govt, do you not? Oh yes I do. All right, so you reap enough... not employing the... people who represent your community. What do you mean by that. I said, how many blacks you have here? Well, blacks don't apply here. Well, you have to see that they apply. How many women you have... in the high-paying jobs? Oh, well, the women do not like to be bosses. Well, you have to make them like it. You might have to create that environment. So our job... at the beginning was to indoctrinate, it was to teach what affirmative action was or is, and what equal opportunity is, because there... is two faces to that coin..." Politicians made a mess out of what is actually is greatest pgm ever created in nation, gives opportunity in way that nobody heard of it. "For instance, Cheseborough-Ponds in Clinton, CT required that any new employees... in 1960 when I was there, had to have a high school diploma... Now do you need a high school diploma to mop a floor? I ask, they say no. But the problem is that in Cheseborough-Ponds we don't expect you to stay mopping floors. We want you to become general manager. So that's why we want you to have at least a high school diploma. And that's baloney... Women, do they need a high school diploma to run a job [?] line? Where a machine comes and puts... the stuff inside a can and the machine puts the cover in there and the woman only looks at that... No, but we expect that woman to become the... foreperson. How many women are forepersons? None. So that's affirmative action, that you look into those structures and reform them, change what is not needed... Affirmative action is to meet with the community to find out



who lives there, what kind of needs are there in terms of employment." Went to VT, IBM, IBM didn't know that there was Indian tribe north of Burlington, they should now. They learned and went there.

121: "In Hartford for instance, you had Travelers, you had Aetna. Aetna Insurance Company and Travelers had a lot of women there. When I went to Travelers, Travelers had approximately 10,000 employees...when I asked Travelers to give me very broken down the depts. Each dept, the underwriters and this and that, I decided to look at underwriters. And I wanted it broken down by date of hire, schooling, starting salary, status at the end. Where are you, from where you started, where are you now? I found out that women with Master's degrees were making less money than a man with a high school diploma. And their answer was, oh, a man been here so long. Oh yeah,...women [were] here also [at] the beginning...Many excuses. Now Travelers created a pgm of affirmative action. They then started looking at dept heads, is this guy a bigot, is this guy fair to women...to minorities, is this guy the problem why there are no women heads in this dept...[it] promoted a lot of women...and minorities and all that...The general manager just get reports but he doesn't see the span of work. So we created for them a picture...The Urban League, the Community Renewal Team, the Puerto Rican Forum, all these city...organizations that are in contact with the people, they become your recruiters. If you use them, then you have a pool to choose from...The newspapers...the Hartford Courant gets a lot of advertising under jobs. Why is that the news Extra couldn't get those? What are you doing to bring to the local newspapers advertising? Are you spending money with these people?"

164: Pgm went through many overhauls. Thinks in 1980, Pres. Carter converted pgm to Dept of Labor. Then split up in many depts. Pgm became more political oriented. When Dept of Defense had more leverage because dealing with big cats, people that got the big funds from the system that not being representative of the local populations and employment rolls. "So education paid off. And many people today are in big jobs because [of] affirmative action." Justice Thomas of Supreme Court doesn't think true, but has helped USA as a whole, put women that had earned positions in place that supposed to be. Took thousands of women from being coffee makers and factory servers into supervisor and management positions. Employers also became wise, called secretary special assistant, but at least that went with a little better money. FM was proud of it.

198: "I retired in 1965. [sic- 1985] In fact...one of the reasons I became disenchanted with the pgm in... 1985, I decided to retire, I was 77 years old...I'm celebrating my 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday fortunately. But I do have beautiful memories of the pgm, and I hope the pgm will continue to be, because it's needed."

209: When still living in Guilford came to know Htfd. "I came to Htfd in 1952...was when I first came to Htfd. In Htfd there was a gentleman called Mr...Julian Vargas. Julian Vargas had come from Puerto Rico to work on the farms, I believe..He was involved in baseball. He liked to organize groups. In fact, I remember one Sunday we came and he took us to a ballgame here in Kinney Park. And in 1952 Mr. Vargas...started to get involved in politics. In Puerto Rico he had been involved in

politics. And so they created, I believe it was in the 50s, the first Democratic chapter of the Hispanic-- the Puerto Rican community on Albany Avenue. There was a man with the name of Julio Quiñones who lives in Willimantic now, and Julian Vargas who is dead now... We came to Htfd to see what they were doing. And Julian at that time was talking about bringing some Puerto Rican fruits and vegetables to Htfd to start a little business. He had a little pickup truck and was peddling around... That was in 1952. In 1953 I returned to Htfd, still not living in CT, I came to live in CT late in '53 but I visit CT and we came to Htfd. They had a meeting and we got involved and talked some ideas... When I moved to CT in 1953, then I started visiting Htfd and... we had a meeting in Meriden, CT with... John Sola... John is in Aguada, PR now. He was a businessman. He had the first [PR] restaurant in Meriden, CT. And there is a police officer who is retired now, Mr. Pereyo, in Meriden. We had a meeting at Sola's restaurant in later '53, and we were talking about ways and means to organize groups and to create a whole state forum for the Puerto Rican community. So in that meeting Mr. Pereyo, Mr. Sola, it was Sam Tirado from Wty, Florencio Morales from Guilford, CT, Julio Quiñones from Htfd, Daniel [?] from NY, representing the office of the govt of PR."

259: "And we decided to petition the govt of PR to establish an office in CT... And they appointed a man to direct the first office of the govt of PR here and the secretary of labor... came... and they send emissaries from there, there was Gov Muñoz Marin was in power in PR, and the first office of the govt of PR was created '54 or somewhere around that era. And Gilberto Camacho was appointed, he became very instrumental, very helpful to the community. And so we visit Stamford, we visit Norwalk, we created a chapter in Norwalk of the Puerto Rican parade, we created a chapter in Bgt, we created a chapter in Willimantic, we created a chapter in Guilford... in New Haven, in Htfd."

275: "Then Maria Sanchez got involved and she became very active in the parade and so on. And we continued... The parade was started I believe... the first parade was held October 4,... 1964. A mass mtg was held at Dylan's [?] Park. So the parade was started around... 1962... the organization... I still know some of the people that were the first 4 people that organized the parade... Mr. [Mariano] Cortez... Juan Rosado who's dead now, Maria Sanchez... there were 3 or 4 or 5 people... Mariano Cortez... is the founder of the PR parade. In 1964 when I came here, I became part of the CRT. We had the meetings in June and July and so on and organized it for the first parade to take place in October. In fact, our speaker was today Senator Dodd, he was the main speaker of that day... The parade was held from where the Firestone House is at the Tunnel in Htfd, we marched through Main St. to Dylan's Park... You know where Colt Park is, back of the Colt's Company... that ended there."

307: "At that very same time, we started incorporating the parade. And 5 of us, I think that one of them was Sam... I know Maria was, and myself... and... from Bgt a gentleman [can't remember name]... who is dead now, incorporated the parade... It's still there... The purpose of forming the parade was to create inspiration in the non-Puerto Rican community, to create awareness of the... total community... it's like, we're here, we are not going anywhere, so you might as well take us in, help us, or else you're going to suffer the consequences. Because actually what we were saying is we're here, so we need

you to have the power to share with us. We need you...to teach us your ways so we could move forward. We want you to open school systems to us, we want you to open your jobs so we can work and earn a living...We want you to share our culture. We want to share with you what we got. Actually that was the idea of the parade. And we in the chapter that we first created-- in fact, I brought from the University of Puerto Rico, that was given to me, a system whereby we were to use like a circle and we were to create a percentage of each monies collected for different projects...For instance, part of that money was to create a fund for educational purposes, for scholarships. We were to create chapters of the major cities and have people from those cities be represented on the statewide committee. So the Puerto Rican committee was going to be statewide for the Puerto Rican Parade of the state of CT. And that was going to be composed of the membership from local communities. And that we were to establish a central office at the capital city. All that still to be seen yet, but we had been working on it...I did not participate after '68 I think...because of my work. But...I was a state coordinator and I was treasurer one time, and I was the first master of ceremony of the parade in Dylan's Park."

361: When got CRT job: "I was traveling from Guilford to Htfd, and there was no hways in those days either. In fact, I was coming to the Univ of Htfd, I was taking courses, and I was leaving Cheseborough-Ponds at 5 o'clock, come home, change, and come here and from here I would go back to Guilford to have dinner sometimes at 1 o'clock in the morning...Then I got the job here and then I continued traveling...I had to go through Rte 17, Middletown, to Rte 77 to Guilford and...in the winter it was no joke. But I did it for over 2 1/2 years. I didn't want to sell the house in Guilford, my wife didn't want to sell the house in Guilford...Don't forget we got a house in Guilford that was a...horse barn. We had no running water...We had to carry water from a spring well that we had in the back. We had no electricity. We had no heating when we moved there in Sept 1955. And we did all that, we put in heating, we put in water...Now my wife doesn't want to leave that. So in 1968 I finally found a way for my wife to say yes. She had had a job at Cheseborough Ponds, and she wasn't happy there, and I found a little business, a...small liquor store on Capitol Ave that was for sale...I bought that and I said, Angie, now you have a little business so you wouldn't be losing anything...She tried that for a year, she didn't like it, then she went to Aetna Insurance Company...So in 1968 we rent an apt on Plainville St here in Htfd...Until we found a place. And we found a man building houses on Lawrence...Circle in Windsor, near the airport. And we went to see the houses, we like it, and he built us a house there...a beautiful home...And in...1973 we moved because my job was taking me away most of the time, Angie was alone, she had to travel from Windsor to Aetna and she was afraid of driving, so I said, well why don't we move to Bloomfield at a bus line, and we found this place."

416: [when moved to htfd] "The first thing I found was that there was a priest here at Sacred Heart Church...obviously he was English-speaking, there was no Hispanic priests. And there was also a minister...Gaudencio Ramirez...was brought here from Mexico to work for, I think it was the First Baptist Church...He was collecting clothes and all that for the Hispanic people. He was very active, and the Catholic church had nobody but laypeople. Like there was Irene Montalvo who lives in W Htfd now...She was a young

lady helping down in the basement and then... there was a problem because the Hispanics had no place to go. Actually, they came to Masses but... the Masses were in English... So eventually they brought Father Las Heras... a Spaniard, he had come from Cuba. See what coincidences are. I was the president of the Civic League of New Haven in 1955. We are having a dance at the Pulaski Hall in NH to raise funds to help the people in PR, and Daniel [?] said to me, Florencio, there is a man here at Yale from Cuba. His name is Segundo Las Heras, he's a priest. He asked me if we could allow him to say some words and I said, why not? Bring him to the microphone... He talked to us about the church... He was a likeable guy... Later on, in 1964, '65 he became the priest of Sacred Heart, or assistant priest anyhow... I call on him many times, we had lunch together, and we became part of the... Urban League. He was involved in many organizations."

469: "Also there was a young man that had come from NY and he was very active with the Pentecostal church on Sims St. His name is Reverend... Jose Felipe Santiago. Jose Felipe was very active and he was recruiting people... for the Pentecostal Church. Active also was a group called NICAP... They were mainly students from Trinity College. There was a young man called... Josh Smith... a very young red-headed guy and he was on Kennedy St here on Pavilion [?] working with... black kids... There was a young, skinny Puerto Rican girl, God bless her. She was very active... her name is Edna Negron. So they had NICAP and they were involved in the community... So I found my work done because I was working for the Community Renewal Team as a fieldworker. I needed these contacts and I needed them to help me understand... and work with the community. So through Edna, through Felipe, and through Father Las Heras, I got to know Olga Mele... and her husband John that was working for the Dept of Welfare... Evelyn Robinson, she was very active, and many other people. And so we had days and nights meetings. The problem was so many."

513: "I remember at one meeting one time it was said that we had 333 Puerto Ricans in Htfd and we had 3 bad apples. Can you imagine that? Today, I don't know how many Puerto Ricans are in the census in Htfd but I know there are thousands. Then we start moving ideas. Trade union... later on was organized. The first Puerto Rican... cultural society was organized, I was there, it was Sarah Romany, Juan Fuentes, Leonard Beamon, Ralph [?]... We formed a group called the Puerto Rican Cultural Society... Julia McKay, she was Julia Ramos in those days, and many others... We met a couple of times at Trinity College... Eventually the organization faded away... but it brought awareness. We had at the Atheneum for the first time the Atheneum was all Puerto Rican. We had a beautiful feast at the Atheneum one time. You have pictures of that all over... I believe it was in 1969 we had Sam Tirado was with Eastern CT College... He was director of pgms there, and he and Dr. Tipton organized a cultural event which was held at the town hall. We used the city hall, we dressed the whole city hall for that event and then the dinner was held at the Atheneum. That was a beautiful event, that was magnificent. I hope some day somebody think about the same idea."

560: "Also we had at the Atheneum a play called... Bitter Bread... It was a young lady. She was a black woman... she died... she was very very good in plays... Gwen Reed was her name. And Gwen taught us... Juan Fuentes was involved, and... also involved in that

was the late Mildred Torres. Also, you talk about involvement. We started La Casa de Puerto Rico with Jose Cruz... on Albany Avenue... Very active in those things were Eugenio Caro who was a policeman when I came to Htfd and... another young man, his wife was a social worker... he was also a policeman, he's still around. I tell you, we worked so hard, the few of us, that we had a hard time. Because it was almost every day we had meetings, almost every night. And we were trying to put together like a puzzle. We were trying to form a society from splinters. And it was so difficult because of the lack of talent. For instance, I remember calling mtgs with Father Las Heras to get the people involved in the church. And one of the things he found was that mostly the Puerto Ricans didn't know they were Catholics. They didn't know in depth the obligations of their own religion. And so they had to be taught. And there was a lot of people... For him that was an educational pgm also. But he became involved and he was very tolerant, and he really did a great job with the Puerto Rican community in bringing them to Sacred Heart... Today Sacred Heart is our church, we go there all the time, and in fact... May 24<sup>th</sup> we're going to have a beautiful pgm at the Stevens Theater at the Htfd Insurance Group to raise funds for the poor children of the city of Htfd."

624: "We created pgms in the political arena. We created pgms in the labor movement. We created pgms in law enforcement. We created pgms with education, like Rita Cohen, she was the director of the Barnard Brown School. Rita didn't know what to do when she found that so many Puerto Ricans who'd come into Htfd couldn't speak English. Now what did you do when you haven't got the expertise or the funding to create pgms... So the church was great in that because they created then the so-called San Juan Center, and that was to serve as a field office for the Puerto Rican community... I think it was in '69... or later on, the San Juan Center was moved and then they brought in a very active young woman, Sister Margaret Johnson. And Margaret wasn't taking no from no one. Margaret and some of us created the San Juan Center of today. We brought in talent, and we became an independent group from the church... We kept the name San Juan Center and we started working on seeking funding for ourselves and we brought a young fellow from the University of CT, Josh Escalera came as the first director and under Margaret Johnson we grew. Those buildings now on Main St belong to the San Juan Center. That was in a deal with Aetna Insurance Company. We created the elderly center, which is still there today. The SJ Center built a home... for the elderly... I was involved in that. Then I became involved with La Casa, which I had been, but not deep in. And once I went to work for the Dept of Labor I got involved with La Casa more actively and they made me president and I was president... for many years... The first job I did with La Casa was to put people there that had knowledge... that had responsibilities... that had contacts... So La Casa board became a group of working individuals in each segment of our society. For instance we had representation from law enforcement, from the lawyers and from the employers and so on. Obviously we had such a dedicated individual in Tony Soto. Tony and Julio Mendoza, those two were and are today leaders of the development of the Puerto Rican community... and the late Mildred Torres. Those are people that if somebody needs to be honored, those are people that should be recorded as the honorees... Like Tony Soto gave so much to... La Casa de Puerto Rico which is there today.

Tape 2, Side A

003: When the riots, directing South Green Neighborhood Center. Young lady directing the church on S Main St. During riots place burglarized, bad time trying to conduct services. She came to see FM at neigh center, she met on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Rev. Julie Ramirez. "She was such a hard-working person that she built a church which today has thousands of people... on Broad St... Reverend Ramirez and her church, La Fe... grew up to a point that she moved out of South Green Center... Then the Catholic Church had the place for sale. They didn't want her there either. The neighbors were opposed to it. And we formed a group, and I organized a group to help come to City Hall and speak in behalf of them, and they were able to get it. And today, it's a very good asset to people. So you talk about involvement, we've been involved with everything."

025: Has 2 children, son in PR, graduated from Bklyn College, recruited for Puerto Rico, children graduated from University of Puerto Rico. One grandchild in NJ, other in FL. Daughter graduated in NY and works in Jewish Hospital in Long Island as a nurse, married, lives in Queens Village, has a daughter who has a boy 50 years old, Michael.

40: "It was beautiful, my childhood... In May 1924, at 5 o'clock in the morning, dark, I left with my grandmother, my father, my aunt Benigna, and my cousin William was 6 months old, for a trip to San Juan. In a Model T Ford. We left at 5 o'clock in the morning in Coamo and we arrived in San Juan when the sun was almost fading. We took the whole day, because the car would only go about 10 miles and you had to get out and fill the radiator with water again... We came to SJ for the first time in my life, and they brought me to La Plaza La Marida, which is in Old San Juan, facing the bay. And they went shopping and I disappeared... They couldn't find me... I was on the shore looking at the boats when they found me. I was 6 years old. And I remember that like it's today."

058: "I grew up in the... mountains... in a place called Tinajas. It's called Tinajas because the houses were up... on a little hill, and below there was a brook, and water was coming out of the rocks, and they called it Tinajas. And there was many palm trees, that was beautiful scenery. Still there... Tinajas was a... subpart of the barrio... The whole barrio is called San Idefonso, which is in honor of the founders of the town of Coamo... Coamo was the 3<sup>rd</sup> town built in Puerto Rico, and by 1539 Coamo had already settlers. It was named a town in 1569, I believe... Coamo was built that way because at those times... the Caribe Indians would come in on the shores of Santa Isabel, which is 14 kilometers from Coamo. And they were killing the... Tainos and they were taking their wives... So they built Coamo as a fortress inland. And they discovered that Coamo had the most beautiful flatlands and that the valley was very productive, and they start farming there and they built a town."

082: "My father was a laborer. My mother was a housewife. In fact my mother was the kind of person that is something unique. Because my mother was abandoned in 1880... Where she died and where she grew up. The Spaniards had built a road, and they built a bridge... in 1880... According to locals and according to the people that raised my mother, this man appeared there with 2 children, 2 little girls. One was older than my mother... Tia Maria... And the man left the two kids there and never came back. They don't know who the man was... so there were 2 families living nearby. One took Maria and the other took Aleja, which was my mother, and they raise her. And my mother grew up there, my mother get married there, and my mother die there. And she never knew where she came from, who her family were, nothing. So the names we took, we took it from the people that raised her." {her name was} Morales. Father's was Santiago Ortiz. He uses mother's last name.

104: "What happened is in Puerto Rico, my mother and my father originally were not married. They married later on. But by the time they get married there was a law in Puerto Rico that if the man was not married, the son was to use the mother's name... But I sign my name Florencio O. Morales. And in my social security it's Ortiz Morales."

112: "My father... worked in whatever was about. If there was to fix a fence, he would fix a fence. But mostly he was a sugar cane worker. Because that was the only job. My mother obviously was in the house... In those days... 60 years is a long time. Because I remember as a child, there were no automobiles. You'd see one car a day, it was a lot. We used to play on the road... There was little machinery too. Most of the work was done by hand. That's why the people didn't believe in education, because you felt that you were wasting your time... In those days the land was your best thing... If you planted something, you expected to get food from your land, and we sharecropped in those days. And that was very good because it helped us keep the family... My father and mother... raised chickens, they raised goats, they raised cows, and we had horses... And my father sometimes he felt he was a millionaire, because he would saddle a horse and go out with a Panama hat and look like a millionaire."

133: "That was a good life in fact because we helped ourselves by growing and producing things. Which is a contrast what we encounter when we came here and became part of a welfare system... There my inspiration always was my grandmother. That was my leader. My grandmother was an educated woman that felt that there is a lot of parasites in this world that teach you to be an unsensible individual. That she felt that if you had senses, you need nothing else... She was a survivor. My grandmother never complained about anything... What she thought was that if you have a problem, sit down and figure out how you could solve it. Don't sit down and complain or ask anybody to do something that you could do by yourself... She died in 1954 but she's still in my heart, she's still in my mind. I remember as a child when she took me out in the woods and taught me how to survive in the woods. She taught me how to survive among animals. We had a lot of horses, a lot of cows and some of them are wild in the woods. And my grandmother would tell me, this is what you've got to look for, this is how you have to defend yourselves... And she taught us about preventing disease, about using common sense, using machete,

surviving in the wild. Avoiding being drowned in a river... How to fish... how to hunt without having a gun. With a sling... and a little stone... She's my leader still."

179: He has a library of photos, slides. "Because when I became aware of how much we lost in our family... and that wasn't too long ago... it was maybe in the... early 70s when I really became aware [of]... how much we lost in the family, in the history of the family. How foolish I had been in not documenting the history of the family. And today many members of my family come to me and ask me questions, especially young... Obviously... when you try to survive yourself, it's very difficult, but I do have a lot of slides, I have a lot of pictures... Maybe 10, 15 albums of pictures."